

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

- 1           1. A method for representing records, the method comprising:  
2                 assigning a unique identifier to a record stored at a record collection site;  
3                 entering the unique identifier in a hierarchical tree structure; and  
4                 sending the hierarchical tree structure to a central storage site.
- 1           2. The method of claim 1 further comprises:  
2                 using the unique identifier to produce an aggregate report; and  
3                 sending the aggregate report to the central storage site.
- 1           3. The method of claim 1 further comprises:  
2                 using the unique identifier at the central storage site to access the record  
3                 stored at the record collection site.
- 1           4. The method of claim 1, wherein the unique identifier includes information  
2                 representing a node located in the hierarchical tree structure.
- 1           5. The method of claim 4, wherein the node is located in a higher position of the  
2                 hierarchical tree structure than the unique identifier.
- 1           6. The method of claim 2, wherein using the unique identifier to produce the  
2                 aggregate report includes counting the unique identifier with a second unique identifier  
3                 assigned to a second record stored at the record collection site.
- 1           7. The method of claim 2, wherein using the unique identifier to produce an  
2                 aggregate report includes summing data included in the record accessed by the unique  
3                 identifier with data included in a second record accessed by a second unique identifier.
- 1           8. The method of claim 4, wherein a unique key that includes information  
2                 representing a second node in the hierarchical tree structure is assigned to the node.
- 1           9. A computer program product, tangibly embodied in an information carrier, for  
2                 representing records, the computer program product being operable to cause a machine to:  
3                 assign a unique identifier to a record stored at a record collection site;

4                   enter the unique identifier in a hierarchical tree structure; and  
5                   send the hierarchical tree structure to the central storage site.

1           10. The computer program product of claim 9, being further operable to cause a  
2 machine to:

3                   use the unique identifier to produce an aggregate report; and  
4                   send the aggregate report to a central storage site.

1           11. The computer program product of claim 9, being further operable to cause a  
2 machine to:

3                   use the unique identifier at the central storage site to access the record stored  
4                   at the record collection site.

1           12. The computer program product of claim 9, wherein the unique identifier includes  
2 information representing a node located in the hierarchical tree structure.

1           13. The computer program product of claim 12, wherein the node is located in a  
2 higher position of the hierarchical tree structure than the unique identifier.

1           14. The computer program product of claim 10, wherein using the unique identifier  
2 to produce the aggregate report includes counting the unique identifier with a second unique  
3 identifier assigned to a second record stored in at the record collection site.

1           15. The computer program product of claim 10, wherein using the unique identifier  
2 to produce the aggregate report includes summing data included in the record accessed by the  
3 unique identifier with data included in a second record accessed by a second unique  
4 identifier.

1           16. The computer program product of claim 12, wherein a unique key that includes  
2 information representing a second node in the hierarchical tree structure is assigned to the  
3 node.

1           17. A method for representing records, the method comprising:

2 receiving a hierarchical tree structure at a central storage site from a record  
3 collection site, the hierarchical tree structure includes a unique identifier assigned to a  
4 record stored at the record collection site.

1 18. The method of claim 17 further comprising:

2 using the unique identifier to access the record stored at the record collection  
3 site.

1 19. The method of claim 17 further comprising:

2 receiving an aggregate report at the central storage site produced at the record  
3 collection site using the unique identifier.

1 20. The method of claim 17, wherein the unique identifier includes information  
2 representing a node located in the hierarchical tree structure.

1 21. A method for representing records, the method comprising:

2 assigning a unique identifier to a record stored at a record collection site;  
3 entering the unique identifier in a hierarchical tree structure at the record  
4 collection site;  
5 sending the hierarchical tree structure to a central storage site; and  
6 using the unique identifier at the central storage site to access the record  
7 stored at the record collection site.

1 22. The method of claim 21, wherein the unique identifier at the record collection  
2 site is used to produce an aggregate report that is sent to the central storage site.

1 23. The method of claim 21, wherein the unique identifier includes information  
2 representing a node located in the hierarchical tree structure.

1 24. A system comprising:

2 a record collection site that includes a computer system that assigns a unique  
3 identifier to a record stored at the record collection site and enters the unique identifier in a  
4 hierarchical tree structure; and

5           a central storage site that receives the hierarchical tree structure from the record  
6   collection site.

1           25. The system of claim 24, wherein the computer system at the record collection site  
2   uses the unique identifier to produce an aggregate report and initiates transmission of the  
3   aggregate report to the central storage site.

1           26. The system of claim 24, wherein the unique identifier includes information  
2   representing a node located in the hierarchical tree structure.